

AERONAUTICAL CHARTING FORUM
Instrument Procedures Group
Meeting 16-01 – April 28, 2016

RECOMMENDATION DOCUMENT

FAA Control # 16-01-326

Subject: FAA Order 8260.46F, “Top Altitude” Charting Constraints

Background/Discussion: It appears there is confusion how “Top Altitudes” should be charted when a procedure serves multiple airports based on the language contained within the FAA Order 8260.46F, Departure Procedure Program. Under paragraph 2-1-3-e (1) (f), it states; “Enter the “Top Altitude(s)” on Form 8260-15B for SIDS when provided by ATC. No more than two “Top Altitudes” are allowed per procedure. The variations permitted are specified in appendix d, section2, and E, section 1. “Top Altitudes” 18,000 feet MSL and above must be specified as a “Flight Level”. The “Top Altitude” must be at or above all altitude restrictions specified along the departure route and transitions.”

Under Appendix D (Conventional SIDS), section 2, paragraph 10 (c) (1) it states; “For a single airport, specify the “Top Altitude(s)” specific to a given runway(s) or transition(s), as applicable.

Examples: CHART: TOP ALTITUDE: 16000, or CHART: TOP ALTITUDE RWY 8/25/34L/34R/35L/35R: 16000; RWY 16L/16R/17L/17R: 12000, or CHART: TOP ALTITUDE: STEVE AND DANNO TRANSITIONS: FL230; CHNHO AND KONOH TRANSITIONS: FL180, or CHART: TOP ALTITUDE: ASSIGNED BY ATC.”

Section 2, paragraph 10 (c) (2) states: “For multiple airports, in addition to paragraph 10.c(1), include the airport names and/or specific runways when “Top Altitudes” differ between airports and/or specific runways.

Examples: Starship Muni - CHART: TOP ALTITUDE: 16000, Anywhere Intl - CHART: TOP ALTITUDE RWY 8/25/34L/34R/35L/35R: 16000; RWY 16L/16R/17L/17R: 12000, and Mayfair Metro - CHART: TOP ALTITUDE 12000. If all airports share a common “Top Altitude,” then state as such: All Airports - CHART: TOP ALTITUDE: 12000.

Under Appendix E (RNAV SIDS), section 1, paragraph 10 (b) (1) states; “For a single airport, specify the “Top Altitude(s)” specific to a given runway(s) or transition(s), as applicable.

Examples: CHART: TOP ALTITUDE: 16000, or CHART: TOP ALTITUDE RWY 8/25/34L/34R/35L/35R: 16000; RWY 16L/16R/17L/17R: 12000, or CHART: TOP ALTITUDE: STEVE AND DANNO TRANSITIONS: FL230; CHNHO AND KONOH TRANSITIONS: FL180, or CHART: TOP ALTITUDE: ASSIGNED BY ATC.”

Under section 2, paragraph 10 (b) (1) states: “For multiple airports, in addition to paragraph 10.b(1), include the airport names and/or specific runways when “Top Altitudes” differ between airports and/or specific runways.

Examples: Starship Muni - CHART: TOP ALTITUDE: 16000, Anywhere Intl - CHART: TOP ALTITUDE RWY 8/25/34L/34R/35L/35R: 16000; RWY 16L/16R/17L/17R: 12000, and Mayfair Metro - CHART: TOP ALTITUDE 12000. If all airports share a common “Top Altitude,” then state as such: All Airports - CHART: TOP ALTITUDE: 12000.”

I have been advised that “appendix D and E” is a little misleading as they just provide examples of different variations allowed, however, they’ve made it clear in paragraph 2-1-3 e (1) (f), page 2-15 that we are still limited to two per procedure.

I understand that only two “Top Altitudes” can be published per procedure, but if you have a SID that applies to multiple airports, then I believe the language within appendix D and E clearly shows that you can have more than two “Top Altitudes” per procedure, but not more than two per airport. Under paragraph 2-1-3-e (1) (f), it advises you that appendix D and E shows the variations allowed, which includes multiple airports attached to a procedure. Each airport has their own procedure built and charted based on the information contained on FAA Form 8260-15B and therefore stating it doesn’t matter how many airports are tied to procedure, you can only have two “Top Altitudes” in my opinion is inefficient. If this interpretation is allowed to continue, it will add confusion and complexity to the NAS. The goal of adding the “Top Altitudes” to a procedure at a particular airport was to inform the pilot of the highest altitude they could climb to if they received a “Climb Via” clearance, but current policy restricts the number of “Top Altitudes” based on a procedure and not based on the possibility that various airports the procedure serves each may uniquely require a different set of “Top Altitudes” to support operational constraints. Additionally, we believe that current “Top Altitude” policy limitations increase workload and complexities for both ATC and pilots. If we are going to move forward with NEXTGEN in a positive manner that ensures safety, we need to ensure the directives containing the criteria/policy are written to allow this to occur.

Recommendations:

Allow two “Top Altitudes” published based on the procedure serving the airport of intended departure and not based solely on the procedure itself. By allowing this to occur, the “Top Altitudes” for each individual airport the procedure serves will be charted independently and will reduce complexity and communications for ATC and pilots. This retains the two “Top Altitude” maximum that will appear on any one chart, yet give ATC operational flexibility at complex locations where a single SID can serve multiple airports.

Comments:

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